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# Media Advisory

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Children Services Focuses on Safety Science and Prevention**

The death of one of our youth, Ma'Khia Bryant was a personal and heartbreaking loss to our workers and Agency. As we approach the one-year anniversary of her death, we continue to share our condolences with Ma'Khia's family, friends, and the community at large. The health and well-being of a community can be determined by looking through the lens of Child Welfare. The challenges in the community become the same challenges that Child Welfare fights to overcome. We ask the community to assist us in the fight against the challenges that lead to neglect and abuse.

The vast majority of the work in child welfare has many success stories, unknown to the media and public. Caseworkers and those who support them engage because they care deeply about the safety and well-being of children. But when families lack access to care and resources, their prosperity and that of the community is negatively affected. The safety net that child welfare provides for the community must be flexible to withstand the limitations of other systems, and the reality is that no system or combination of systems can prevent all tragedies. Flexibility permits the agency to take advantage of new systems for addressing childhood adversity that are based in safety science and focus on prevention.

The needs exacerbated by the documented stresses of the COVID pandemic and nationwide workforce issues are unprecedented. We rely on community partners to assist in minimizing risk to children as much as humanly possible. The agency has and continues to reach out to the state, court, community agencies and service providers to work together as we rethink, develop, and secure placements/services responsive to the diverse and intensive needs of our community's youth. Through the agency's collaborations with local law enforcement, DD, ADAMH, NCH and others, we are hopeful that combined creative thinking will result in a robust array of services that will better equip parents, families, and our community to respond to the needs and improve outcomes for today's youth.

## **Franklin County Children Services**

*Through collaboration with families and their communities, we advocate for the safety, permanency and well-being of each child we serve in a manner that honors family and culture.*

Through implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act we are seeking kinship caregivers to best maintain the stability of a child in need. We applaud the State's initial effort in providing additional monies and resources for kin. We also support the State's effort to implement a Youth and Family Ombudsman Office. We also recognize that our teachers are back in school, as these valuable resources assist every day in recognizing the signs of child abuse and neglect. This is often the first step in providing vital linkages to the child welfare system so that children and families can receive supportive services.

Internally, the agency is committed to system review and reform through membership in the National Partnership for Child Safety, with a focus on safety science. This complements the Family First shift to more front-end preventative solutions. The agency has committed to a culture of safety, in decision-making and review, as have other critical industries including airlines and health care. With this alignment, we are committed to re-examining and replacing interventions to ensure that the services we offer are focused on the safety and well-being of our children.

Our agency continues to grieve the loss of Ma'Khia along with the community and her family. We continue to embrace and empower children and families while encouraging the community to take an active role in supporting the positive development of our youth. Get involved with the community; volunteer, foster, mentor, donate and support agencies that support children.

**If you suspect child abuse or neglect, call us at 614-229-7000. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to learn of services available to support our children and youth.**

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